



IMPROVING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH PARALYSIS

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Much still needs to be done to improve the overall health of people with paralysis. Some of the secondary conditions they suffer from include pressures sores (decubitus ulcers), urinary tract infections, depression, and obesity, which can be prevented through education and health promotion programs.

CDC has established a national coordinating facility to provide educational materials, referral services, and self-help guidance for people with paralysis, their families, and caregivers. Healthcare providers and professionals also receive information on paralysis, methods to prevent secondary conditions and address quality of life issues. CDC is expanding the dissemination of educational outreach materials to increase the knowledge and understanding of paralysis among those most affected. Collaborative national relationships have been established with rehabilitation facilities, hospitals, and disability advocacy and voluntary support groups. CDC is developing the ability to measure the public health impact of paralysis through demographic and statistical research with a focus on the prevalence, causes, and extent of secondary conditions. CDC will provide leadership in helping to facilitate health promotion activities (e.g., improving physical activity, exercise and nutrition, confronting depression/isolation issues, managing weight, quitting tobacco use) among people with paralysis to enhance physical and emotional health.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

- CDC funded two studies to address the role of supportive social relationships among people with paralysis. These studies were conducted at the Medical University of South Carolina and the University of Nevada, Reno.
- CDC has supported the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Resource Center, which was established to help improve the quality of life for people with paralysis. The center is a coordinating facility with information specialists, a library, and a website providing educational materials, referral services, and self-help guidance to those living with paralysis, their families, and their caregivers. In addition, the center funds community-based projects to improve quality of life for people with paralysis.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Assist the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Resource Center to extend services and increase the impact of these services for all individuals and families who can benefit from them.
- Ensure that people with paralysis are included in all programs designed to improve the health and well-being of people with disabilities.
- Support additional research to expand the understanding of the public health impact of paralysis.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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